

for piano and viola, which was published in 1804 and given the opus number 42—though probably not by Beethoven.

The Serenade is a charming and totally unpretentious work, hardly suited to the conventional solemnity of concert-hall performance. Its opening French march is repeated at the end, and in between there are five short, mainly dance movements, whose structures are simple and concise—two- and three-part forms, simple rondos and a set of variations (the *Andante quasi Allegretto* movement); the *Adagio* of movement I is the most 'serious' in mood, a ternary structure whose main theme is rhapsodically ornamented in the repeat. The *Menuetto* and *Trio* recalls some of Haydn's early quartet movements, its brief horn-call coda supporting the allusion. Movement III is a rondo structure, in which a song-like theme in the minor mode alternates with a breathless scherzo, dramatically abbreviated on its second appearance. In the *alla Polacca*—also a rondo—the cello emerges as soloist in the second episode, with a high, floating line whose range extends to E, two octaves above middle C. The penultimate set of variations are of the decorative sort, each instrument in turn offering a virtuosic exposition of the theme.

R.McA.

Next concert: 11 January

THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

VERDI Quartet

ELLIOTT CARTER Quartet no. 2

BEETHOVEN Quartet opus 18 no. 5

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EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY CONCERTS

1972-73

THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

Miles Baster Austin Patterson

Michael Beeston David Edwards

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 11 January 1973

VERDI 1813-1901

String Quartet in E Minor

Allegro
Andantino
Prestissimo
Scherzo Fuga

After the triumphant production of *Aida* in Cairo in 1871, Verdi was beset with invitations from various Italian opera-houses to direct in person the local première of his newest opera. One of the few such invitations that he accepted was that from Naples, whither he went in December 1872 to supervise productions of both *Don Carlos* and *Aida*. However, after the production of *Don Carlos*, the leading soprano, Teresa Stolz, fell ill. The preparations for *Aida* were delayed, and it was during this period of enforced leisure, in March 1873, that the quartet was written. Unlike the operas, it was given no public baptism of fire. Indeed for several years the only people to hear the quartet were those Neapolitan friends who were in the habit of gathering together in Verdi's hotel in the evenings, and who on one such sociable occasion were surprised and delighted to be regaled with a performance of their host's latest composition.

The composer who in the 1840s and 1850s had resolved the most lurid and turbulent melodramas into immaculate and lucid musical patterns will not be suspected of progressive tendencies in the medium of the string quartet. Verdi's models are to be found in the quartets of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, works which he had known and studied throughout his career. The formal patterns which he employs are the time-honoured ones of sonata, rondo, scherzo and trio, and fugue.

Nevertheless the quartet is not lacking in idiosyncratic and personal touches. It is, for example, wholly characteristic of Verdi's fondness for clarity of outline that the sonata-movement, the *Allegro*, should differentiate so sharply between the themes, which are of an entirely lyrical character, and the busily-worked transitions and episodes. And it is clearly proper that in the trio section of the third movement, Verdi should replace the types of dance popular in the Viennese repertory with a serenade-like episode in that 'Neapolitan' idiom that Donizetti had brought into the mainstream of Italian operatic music. Noteworthy too is the absence of a real slow movement, the *Andantino* being more in the nature of an elegant dance. Without the stimulus provided in opera by character and situation, Verdi did not easily command a sustained and intensive lyricism. Like the instrumental music in his operas, his quartet retains much of the character of the divertimento.

D.K.

*VILLA-LOBOS, H. Quartet no.6, was substituted for this work.

*ELLIOTT CARTER b.1908

String Quartet no. 2 (1959)

Introduction
Allegro fantastico
Presto Scherzando
Andante espressivo
Allegro

One of the most challenging and important composers in the field of American chamber music, Elliott Carter began his career under the influence of Copland and did not emerge as a major figure until the piano sonata of 1945-6. Here as in subsequent works the approach is much more clearly related to Ives and particularly to the rhythmic experiments such as were heard in his second quartet earlier in the season.

Since that time the complexity of Carter's music has increased and Ives' concept of linear and rhythmic independence has been carried by him to extremes un-dreamt of even by his European contemporaries.

Thus, as in parts of the Ives quartet, here too each instrument is meant to have its own character and style of playing, its own predominant intervals and rhythmic shapes. Indeed the composer at first intended that the four instruments should play from the four corners of the platform, an idea which, needless to say, turned out to be impracticable. The first violin plays with bravura and brilliance, the second violin is anti-lyrical, and uses all kinds of pizzicato, the viola is the 'expressive' member and has glissandi and portamenti, while the cello is rhapsodic and plays many small note-groups independently of the other tempi.

The form of the work is best described as continuous variation; there is no repetition of material, no recapitulation, no imitation, and the composer himself has described it as a 'series of events in time'.

The *Introduction* presents the four instruments as quite different personalities, each playing its own kind of music. The *Allegro fantastico* follows without a break and is dominated by the virtuoso style of the first violin, with the others entering in a tentative and fragmentary manner. At the point where all the instruments have reached equal status, the viola leads off with an accompanied cadenza and this in turn leads directly into the *Presto Scherzando*. Here the cello finally dominates and has its own accompanied cadenza in its own rhapsodic and rubato style.

The *Andante* is led off by the viola, but long sustained notes and chords gradually dominate the scene, until a release is eventually achieved in a cadenza for first violin (this time un-

accompanied) which contains the only hint of recapitulation in the whole work.

In the final *Allegro* the highest point of complexity is reached in passages where the instruments play entirely 'against' each other, in simultaneous fours, sevens, threes and fives, all being in the end reduced to fragments without any attempt at synthesis.

The work thus represents a new approach to Quartet writing. It also raises the question (so important at the present time) as to whether linear and rhythmic independence can best be achieved by such complexities or whether a greater measure of metric freedom may not prove to be more fruitful in the end. K.L.

INTERVAL

BEETHOVEN 1770-1827

Quartet in A major, opus 18 no. 5

Allegro
Menuetto
Andante cantabile
Allegro

Anybody who cares to cast their mind back to the earliest weeks of 1970 will be aware of how much can happen in three years. But the abstraction of considering the period 1795 to 1798 may seem very much less immediate to us than to the young composer who had lived through them. He must have given much thought to the suggestion of one of his Viennese patrons, Count Apponyi, that he should embark upon the composition of string quartets. But Beethoven at 24 was too well aware of the responsibilities of quartet composition in the Vienna of 1795. Judging by the evidence of his studies with Albrechtsberger, he must have quickly come to realise that the heart of string quartet writing lay in the mastery of that contrapuntal freedom which he was striving to acquire; his skill as improviser of brilliant and effective piano music had led him to the final versions of the seven piano sonatas contained in opus 2, 7, 13 and 14, but this was not the contrapuntist's skill, and well he knew it. In the end, the six quartets opus 18 were completed for the commission of Prince Lobkowitz, Beethoven's earliest patron in Vienna. The sketch-books dating from the middle of 1798 to the end of 1799 show a singleness of purpose—the bringing to completion of the quartets opus 18 nos. 1, 2, 3 and 5. Very much less is known about the composition of numbers 4 and 6.

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The sonata, fifty years earlier, showed hints of its dramatic possibilities; it was written on a much more modest scale, and with such fluency that publication in sets was the rule rather than the exception. Beethoven's half-dozen shows no mere facility, but a protracted effort to extend the inner drama of this kind of composition; according to the ideas contained in each, so must the individual form sustain them. If the F major quartet shows some signs of Beethoven's being able to use his improviser's talent in its first movement, quite the opposite is the case with the A major, no. 5 in the final published order. The first movement, with its extreme fluency of delivery, may seem less memorable than the other three. The sketch-books reveal, as always, the immeasurable gap between the competent last sketch and the inevitable final version, first of the Menuetto theme, which weaves its own peculiar spell in its first few notes, and of the theme for the Andante variations. Again and again the sketch-books show how Beethoven seemed to come upon his essential up-beat to the start of a theme after having progressed some way with the rest of it. Here the anonymous character of the melody in all but the first four bars of its second half, plus the quaver up-beat to each half, were what the composer finally needed to launch each variation into life, notably the fourth with its melodic resemblance to the theme and its harmonic transformation. It is in the Finale that Beethoven has maintained his characteristic large gestures for the medium of string quartet with the greatest confidence, even if the rhythm of its second subject seems to derive from a Mozartian change of movement—long notes in the same quick tempo. After another five years Beethoven was to show, in the quartet, that his debt to Mozart had already been well and truly paid.

C.K.

Next concert : Thursday 18 January

THE REID ORCHESTRA

KENNETH LEIGHTON *conductor*

MANOUG PARIKIAN *violin*

BEETHOVEN Overture—Leonora No. 3

SCHUMANN Violin Concerto

BRAHMS Symphony No. 1